



Refugee Resettlement Policy

Why Collaboration Matters

Contents

3	Executive summary
4	Introduction
5	Why collaborate?
7	How to create effective collaboration
10	References

Executive summary

When it comes to refugee settlement and integration, collaboration between stakeholders – academics, community organizations, settlement provider organizations, and people with lived experience (PWLEs) – ensures that diverse perspectives and expertise are brought to bear on decision-making, helping to make policies and programs more responsive to the needs of those they are intended to serve.

This policy brief summarizes the conversation from an episode of CYRRC's podcast, *The Refuge*, between Dr. Howard Ramos - political sociologist and Chair of Sociology Department at Western University; David Cashaback - senior director for Settlement and Integration Policy at Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC); and Hanen Nanaa - Ontario regional advisor at the Liberal Research Bureau, in the Parliament of Canada, founder of Books, Art, Music Collective for Youth; and a former Syrian refugee. They chat about the importance of collaboration, what effective collaboration looks like, and offer recommendations on how to include PWLEs in policy and program development.



Why collaborate?

Building partnerships between government and nongovernment actors has become increasingly important to modern governance (Shields & Evans, 2012); this claim has only become more evident after multiple efforts to settle large cohorts of refugees. Scholarly analysis of the Syrian refugee crisis reveals that collaboration among a range of stakeholders and across multiple sectors was essential (Hamilton et al., 2020). Collaboration is a necessary framework, not only for emergency response to refugee resettlement, but also for newcomer settlement and integration more broadly (Hamilton et al., 2020). The settlement process involves different moving parts –such as housing, education, financial support, and health care—that ideally operate in conjunction with each other, making collaboration essential (Pelley, 2022). However, this level of collaboration has not been fully realized throughout Canada (Pelley, 2022).



“[W]hen we combine collaboration with dialogue with stakeholder[s] I think we see power. So, it’s powerful to have dialogue and conversation especially when we address community issue[s] or when we talk about shaping policy.”

- Hanen Nanaa

Collaboration more often than not results in new innovations (Hamilton et al., 2020). Partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and PWLE can generate new knowledge relevant to policy concerns (Shields & Evans, 2012). Additionally, government and academic partnerships can be a cost-effective investment in knowledge mobilization that benefit evidence-based policymaking when governments are dealing with reduced policy capacity (Shields & Evans, 2012).



"[F]rom the policy end, [collaboration] really helps to figure out the opportunities that are there to make a difference and make impact. So, if you only have one of those experiences, you're only talking to one set of audiences and you end up having blinders and pitfalls."

- Howard Ramos

Partnership between government and CBOs in the provision of settlement services has long been popular (Shields & Evans, 2012) and immigrant- and refugee-supporting organizations have long recognized the value of collaborating with the wider community, including schools and health-care providers (Pelley, 2022). However, there is a pressing need to include PWLE in these partnerships at all levels of policy and service provision (Pelley, 2022). PWLE must truly be partners in the process, not just token attendees (Pelley, 2022).

The success in resettling Syrians was due in large part to effective collaboration made possible through a greater openness to mutual listening and learning and more flexible ways of implementing policy and regulations by different levels of government (Hamilton et al., 2020). This flexibility and collaboration has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic as well. This collaboration between all stakeholders must continue to be prioritized.

Example: Syrian refugee crisis

To settle Syrian refugees quickly in Canada, academics, service providers, communities, and policy makers had to come together. Academics were able to provide research from past refugee cohorts, such as the Indochinese cohort in the 1970s or the refugee cohorts from the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Service provider organizations and people with refugee experience filled in the gaps of the research as it related to Syrian communities, did on-the spot translations, and corrected cultural assumptions. These groups worked with policy makers who were delivering the services and projects that had to undergo nimble adaptations and, in the end, helped the Syrian cohort settle and integrate.

How to create effective collaboration

> **Maintain an ethos of humility**

Our guests identified humility as one of the key ingredients of healthy partnerships; allowing us to reach out, ask questions, pay attention to unheard voices, and avoid making assumptions. This also means having humility for the process and recognizing that policy, research, and service provision may all operate on different timelines.

> **Give people with refugee experience a seat at the table**

Giving people with refugee experience a seat at the table can help create more effective programs and policies. Examples of what this looks like in practice include creating advisory groups of PWLE and connecting them to decision makers, engaging PWLE in focus groups to discuss proposed programs/policies, or hiring refugee ambassadors to help inform the program/policy development.

Example: IRCC youth advisory group

The IRCC Youth Advisory Group (YAG) consists of roughly 20 youth, between 16 to 24 years old, with lived experience as either a refugee, an international student, a migrant worker, or other personal experience with the immigration system. In 2021, the YAG produced a series of recommendations on anti-racism initiatives, which they shared with two federal ministers, the settlement sector, and IRCC senior management.

> **Recognize the value of data from diverse sources**

Data can be collected in multiple ways including, but not limited to: surveys, interviews, focus groups, photovoice, etc. In the social sciences, triangulation is the use of different data sources so that diverse viewpoints can illuminate a topic (Olsen et al., 2004). *Continued on following page...*

Triangulation allows for a deeper understanding of complex issues, such as immigrant and refugee integration (Flick et al., 2019), and improves the validity of research carried out in challenging contexts, such as migration and settlement (Ahmad, 2014).

Different data sources have different audiences and impacts. No single source of knowledge or information is more important than any other. It is important that we consider whether similar patterns or themes appear across different sources of information, and that we pay attention to what the data may fail to tell us. Partnerships and collaboration bring in diverse perspectives to identify commonalities and blind spots.

Policy Recommendations

- Create advisory groups of stakeholders, specifically people with refugee experience, and connect them to key decision makers.
- Consult with the people your program or policy is aimed at by conducting focus groups or hiring refugee ambassadors.
- Ensure there are culturally sensitive initiatives to allow people with refugee experience to fully engage in collaborative decision-making.
 - As first steps, translate materials and provide funding for interpretation training.
 - Further steps could involve the hiring of multilingual individuals in government offices and community organizations (Pelley, 2022).
- Build partnerships based on trust and real give and take; all parties must be treated equitably and with respect. Try to avoid unequal power relationships where the funder defines the terms and conditions of the relationship (Shields & Evans, 2012).

- Build upon areas where each partner’s mutual self-interest intersects to construct creative and long-lasting collaboration (Shields & Evans, 2012).
- Engage peer researchers who can meaningfully influence the research by reflecting on their lived experience of the topic under study. PWLE can be involved in research at three levels:
 - Advisory peers who offer guidance and support (e.g., advisory boards and steering committee).
 - Employment peers who are hired as core members of the research team and assigned tasks within a project.
 - Partner peers who are brought in as leaders and decision-makers on the project (Arteaga et al., 2022).
- Ensure equity in the resources, services, and opportunities available to different groups of refugees with the understanding that some groups have a greater ability to self-advocate.

This policy brief draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

References

Ahmad, B. (2014). Exploring the role of triangulation in the production of knowledge for urban health policy: An empirical study from informal settlements in Aleppo, Syria. *Forum for Development Studies*, 41(3), 433-454.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2014.963143>

Arteaga, M. C., Workentin, M., Abeshu, G., Anene, I., & Alamgir, A. (2022). Role and Level of Engagement of Peer Researchers in Systematic Reviews: A Review Article. *Advances in Research*, 23(5), 6-17. <https://doi.org/10.9734/air/2022/v23i530345>

Flick, U., Hirsland, A., & Hans, B. (2019). Walking and talking integration: Triangulation of data from interviews and go-alongs for exploring immigrant welfare recipients' sense(s) of belonging. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(8), 799-810.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418809515>

Hamilton, L. K., Veronis, L., & Walton-Roberts, M. (Eds.). (2020). *A national project : Syrian refugee resettlement in canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Olsen, W. K., Haralambos, M., & Holborn, M. (2004). Triangulation in Social Research:: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed. In *Developments in sociology*. Causeway Press Ltd.

Pelley, E. (2022). *Finding safe harbour: supporting the integration of refugee youth*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Shields, J., & Evans, B. (2012). Building a policy-oriented research partnership for Knowledge Mobilization and Knowledge Transfer: The case of the Canadian Metropolis Project. *Administrative Sciences*, 2(4), 250-272.

Further Reading

Dughman-Manzur, A. (2022, Mar 18). Letter to the Minister regarding the immigration measures in response to the Ukraine crisis. Canadian Council for Refugees.



THE REFUGE

POLICY MATTERS

CYRIRC

CYRIRC

Listen to *The Refuge* Podcast, and access more resources at:

www.cyrrc.org